

# The American Record Guide

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—C. J. Luten

## The Fabulous Phonograph

Roland Gelatt  
(Book Review)



Victoria de los Angeles

## TWO BOOKS

**THE FABULOUS PHONOGRAPH.** By Roland Gelatt. J. B. Lippincott Company. 320 pages. \$4.95.

▲TODAY, we think of the phonograph as a valued instrument for the reproduction of music. Yet, twenty-five years ago it was scorned by most musicians. Today, it is beginning to form criteria of criticism and in time it may well be the criterion. The late Olin Downes, a friend of the writer, was beginning to see the handwriting on the wall, and other critics who in the past have scorned this musical instrument are treating it today with more respect.

Mr. Gelatt treats it with true respect, as one of the younger generation who discovered and admired the phonograph from its best days. Mr. Gelatt, a former associate of the writer, has delved into the history of the phonograph with considerable enthusiasm, which he imparts to the reader. This could be a dry subject—indeed it has been treated as such in the past—but Mr. Gelatt has traced its history with lively interest and provided a friendly treatise on the men who devised the machines and the musicians who recorded for it. It took considerable time and effort to assemble this book and its author travelled over Europe as well as this country to ferret out those informative facts that he provides. Though he gives the facts on technical developments from Edison's early efforts down to the present, he shows his interest lies in the musical development of the instrument, which is as it should be. For a dry technical treatise would not interest a large audience.

There has been a definite need for this book. Not since Ogilvie Mitchell's *Talking Machines* was published in London in 1921 have we had a book like it. For the technical minded, H. Courtney Bryson's *The Gramophone Record*, published in London in 1935, still remains an invaluable source but could be advantageously brought up to date. As a friendly disposed adherent of the phonograph since early childhood and a record critic for thirty years, the writer welcomes this book to his library shelf. —P.H.R.

**THE DISC BOOK.** By David Hall & Abner Levin. Long Player Publications, New York, N.Y. 471 pp. with Addenda and Index. \$7.50.

▲THIS IS a book for record-collecting beginners, written by two men in the record field—David Hall, now recording director of Mercury, and Abner Levin, manager of one of the largest record shops in New York. Mr. Hall, who is well known and admired for his cordial approach to music and recordings in his previous books, has a collaborator who knows what the public at large desires since he has long dealt personally with countless record-seeking music lovers.

There is a resourceful accumulation of information in this book presented in, what one might term, the "culture in a capsule" manner. It is a lengthy treatise extending to 47 chapters, and addenda and an index which, while not addressed to the experienced and discriminating listener, should please the record novice who seeks guidance in the vast field of LP discs. And, if he desires a treatise on music history, the latter part of the book will give him an initiation. The nucleus of the book, however, lies in its first 19 chapters and, in relation to its title, it could have been terminated there.

The book opens with a chapter on equipment in which the authors wisely stress that listening pleasure derives from "an adequate aural representation of what is to be found in the grooves of the recordings you may acquire." Chapter 2 takes us "behind the scenes of recording," with some helpful hints at the end on the care of records and equipment. Its rather obvious endorsement of the single microphone record technique of Mercury without further qualifications might have been omitted. Chapter 3 is about record manufacturers which should, in most cases, please the companies. Chapter 4 recommends books and periodicals.

Chapter 5, the longest in the book, is called "The Well Sound Record Library." It lists recommended works by composers. Chapter 6 deals briefly with interpretation. The next 13 chapters, beginning with "Conductors and Orchestras," deal with other musical ensembles and solo artists. Brief notes on the artists and recording recommendations are given. For those who have acquired other books with recommendations, it will be of interest to make comparisons. For the most part, the recommendations are valid and they include many worthy releases neglected by others in their surveys. Some recommendations, however, are open to contention—for example, the unqualified endorsement of the Roth Quartet performances of Mozart's quartets (issued by Mercury) in which the ensemble lacks

essential polish and frequently deviates from pitch. Such misjudgments, however, are the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, the impartiality generally shown in the artists' section is praiseworthy. In the case of duplicated recommendations, the decision of the "best" is not unwisely left to the individual listener.

The book has 32 pages of well chosen photographs of modern artists and composers as well as a scattered collection of amateurish drawings of older composers that add nothing to the otherwise generally attractive eye-appeal of the volume.

—S.N.

## GERALD MOORE

**THE UNASHAMED ACCOMPANIST;** Gerald Moore (speaking, with piano illustrations). Angel 35262, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THE true *raison d'être* of this recording, I suspect, is not at all to proselytize the purportedly vast numbers of people who do not appreciate the vital importance of the accompanist. I find it difficult to believe that there are many such ignoramus left. No, I think this disc was made because Gerald Moore wanted to make it, and I think it will be a success because everyone will want to play it for the other fellow and so on, *ad infinitum*. And mind you, every last person will enjoy it immensely despite the fact that they agree absolutely with the point of view of Gerald Moore. They will enjoy it because what everyone with any sense knows already he tells them with such charm and wit that it sounds for the moment like new information. Moore has only recently discovered that he can capitalize on his anonymity (*cf. Ambrose Bierce: ". . . a thousand critics shouting he's unknown. . ."*) by giving lecture-recitals about it. Having panicked Town Hall last season, he is now, I understand, about to embark on a tour, and to the devil with playing with lid closed for temperamental sopranos and such. This recording will give the circuit a sizable foretaste of the delights that are to come, but it will give that Town Hall audience (along with all musically literate folk) a tinge of sadness lest Moore decide to abjure his high calling for a financially greener new pasture and the dubious promise of more self-expression. Give him equal billing, ye famous artists and artistes; even give him a stanza of the program to himself—anything to lure him back where he belongs. But first, listen herewith and understand why he wants to go. —J.L.

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# SIX NIGHTS AT THE OPERA

**BORODIN:** *Prince Igor* (Complete opera); Dushan Popovich (Igor), Valeria Heybalova (Yaroslava), Noni Zhunetz (Vladimir), Zarko Tzveych (Galitsky & Konchak), Melanie Burgarinovich (Konchakova), others, Chorus and Orchestra of the National Opera, Belgrade, conducted by Oscar Danon. London set XLLA 30, 5 discs, \$24.90.

▲IN DECEMBER 1952, Period issued a Bolshoi Theatre performance of this opera which, considering its derivation from Russian tapes, was well enough recorded, but in this release we have marvelously realistic reproduction, sumptuous in sound and free from blemish except in some loud choral passages. The Period set omitted the entire third act, which explains Igor's escape from Konchak. Here, we have the entire opera adding up to over four hours of truly atmospheric operatic entertainment.

The orchestral playing in this set surpasses the previous issue, for Oscar Danon's musical direction is more vital and sensitive than that of A. Malik-Pashayev. One has the feeling that Danon not only knows the score intimately but cherishes an admiration for it. Bolshoi's singers are uneven, as indeed are Belgrade's. Popovich, as Igor, may be vocally less impressive than Ivanov, but he has a firm voice and he brings dignity and stateliness to his characterization. Tzveych, doubling as Chaliapin formerly did in the roles of Prince Galitzky and Konchak, makes more of the Prince's character than of Konchak's. He lacks requisite swagger and his voice has not the richness of sound of Mark Reizen. Zhunetz, as Vladimir, lacks the grace of Lemeshev in his lovely aria in Act 2, but otherwise he is quite competent.

On the distaff side Melanie Burgarinovich, as Konchak's daughter, is an operatic "find," for hers is a rich and sensuous mezzo-soprano voice with dramatic thrust. Since she plays a prominent part in Act 3, one is grateful that the act is included in this set. Valeria Heybalova, as Yaroslava, has a more youthful voice than Period's Smolenskaya, and she sings most of the music more easily. But neither soprano has the vocal charm essential to the character. The Belgrade chorus is well trained and highly capable, but I am inclined to give the palm to Bolshoi's chorus for its often more fervent and vital impulses.

As an experience in Russian National opera this set, with its fine reproduction and its completeness, serves the issue better than the previous one. Few who give an evening to it will find their attention lagging, for the loosely-built dramatic structure of this score is less apparent

from the recording than it would be in the opera house. Moreover, the originality of Borodin's music is quite unusual for its time.

—P.H.R.

**MOZART:** *Cosi fan tutte* (Opera Buffa in 2 Acts); Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (Fiordiligi), Nan Merriman (Dorabella), Leopold Simoneau (Ferrando), Rolando Panerai (Guglielmo), Lisa Otto (Despina), Sesto Eruscantini (Don Alfonso), Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel set 3522, 3 discs, \$15.94 or \$10.44.

▲THIS IS an illusory performance of *Cosi fan tutte* that conjures a dream of 18th-century *opéra intime* with its vocal suavity and instrumental delicacy so seldom heard in opera houses of today. *Cosi fan tutte* belongs in a small theatre;



Nan Merriman

it is that kind of opera buffa. This is the kind of performance that, one can believe, Mozart intended—intimate, subtle and elegant. If one examines the score carefully, one discovers that Mozart implied that much of the music was to be sung and played *piano*. It is to Karajan's credit that he has faithfully observed the markings in the score. The recent Metropolitan Opera performance in English, recorded by Columbia, is far removed from this one for it belies the intentions of its composer. It is opera buffa in the vernacular, not too far removed from a Broadway show. That performance lacks the grace and charm of this one. Since prevailing custom has tended for many years to broaden the style of *Cosi fan tutte* in large opera houses, some may not immediately appreciate this type of presentation. Yet the late Fritz Busch aimed for and achieved the same kind of performance at Glyndebourne, though the recording technique of the Glynde-

bourne set, made in the late 1930s, did not retain the subtle dynamic nuances of the present set, owing to monitoring that raised the level of sound. Here, we have true extended range reproduction with all the delicate partials that Mozart's music conjures and vocal realism that is not belabored by engineering trickery.

The interpretation rates with the Glyndebourne set. Karajan shapes and holds the spirited performance together as knowingly as did Busch—no mean feat, since his singers had not previously enjoyed the benefits of numerous performances as had the Glyndebourne group. Karajan's absorption with the score is as much a labor of love as was Busch's. His elegant musicianship is shared by the singers, whose musicality is equally praiseworthy. Schwarzkopf is a lovely Fiordiligi, who sings expressively at all times and phrases like a celestial being, though sometimes, as in her aria *Come scoglia*, she sounds better in her upper and middle registers than in her lower. Wisely, she does not press the point. It is good to have a mezzo-soprano in the role of Dorabella, and particularly to have it entrusted to the gifted Nan Merriman, who proves her worth as a musicianly artist. Casting like this makes for vocal contrast which, when the voices blend well as here, is most satisfying. Lisa Otto makes an amusing Despina though somewhat lacking in flexibility. However, I do not think she has the true "feel" of the Italian language to make hers the sole earthy characterization of the opera's cast that it should be.

Simoneau makes a fine Ferrando, singing always with ingratiating tone. Panerai as Guglielmo, subduing his powerful voice, is acceptable, though a lesser personality than Domgraf-Fassbaender was. Bruscantini as Don Alfonso is surprisingly successful with his subtle characterization. Usually, we have a larger bass voice which does not always fit ideally in the ensembles. The chorus is excellent.

This performance has the usual cuts made in the opera house and what some might regard as unorthodox cuts in the recitatives, "reduced to a necessary minimum," as Alec Robertson observed in *The Gramophone*. Two arias from the second act, omitted in the Glyndebourne set, are restored—Ferrando's *Tradito, schernito* and Dorabella's *E amore un ladracello*. The latter, Miss Merriman succeeds in making one of the highlights of the set.

—P.H.R.

**PUCCINI:** *Madama Butterfly* (Opera in 3 Acts); Victoria de los Angeles (Butterfly), Anna Maria Canali (Suzuki), Giuseppe di Stefano (Pinkerton), Maria Huder (Kate Pinkerton), Tito Gobbi (Sharpless), Renato Ercolani (Goro), Arturo la Porta (Yamadori), Bruno Balsaliero (The Bonze), Orchestra and Chorus of the Opera House, Rome,

Gianandrea Gavazzeni (cond.). RCA Victor set LM-6121, 3 discs, \$11.94.

▲THIS, the seventh LP version of *Madama Butterfly*, has much to command it—mainly the purity and beauty of de los Angeles' singing and the often thrilling voice of di Stefano. Considering the tender age of the heroine, Miss de los Angeles creates an illusion that is in keeping with the character. She conveys ardor and pathos but lacks dramatic intensity and true anguish (qualities that Puccini stressed in his music). The most poignant and moving *Butterfly* to be heard to date on records, Renata Tebaldi, thrills one more than does de los Angeles. "Think of *Butterfly* as an old soul in a young body," says a friend of mine who takes his theology most seriously, "and you understand why Puccini conceived her musically as he did, suggesting a maturity beyond her years." Be that as it may, sopranos with dramatic intensity and a feeling for anguish from Destinn and Farrar to Tebaldi have proved the most satisfying interpreters of the role. Tebaldi acts with her voice as no other *Butterfly* on LP records, while de los Angeles, who never abuses the natural qualitative beauty of her voice, is content to create an illusion of youthful gentleness and sweetness. One cannot gainsay her interpretation, for essentially she is not remiss in creating her characterization from the story rather than the music. The first *Butterfly*, Rosina Storchio, was a lyric soprano who, I am told, underlined the ingenuousness and adolescence of the character, somewhat in the manner that Toti dal Monte does in her recorded performance. Puccini's music, however, invites more passion and anguish than a lyrical artist like dal Monte contrives. Miss de los Angeles' interpretation lies between Tebaldi's and dal Monte's.

Of all the Pinkertons, heard on records, Gigli is vocally the most ingratiating. While di Stefano is equally as fine a singer, his Pinkerton has aptly been called hard-boiled by an English critic. Campora, though vocally less thrilling, is more sympathetic. Tito Gobbi is a knowing Sharpless though less sympathetic than Inghilleri and Basiola. Outside of his rough treatment of the Prelude to Act I Gavazzeni is a knowing interpreter of Puccini's music who, however, favors overstatement in dramatic moments. Though a competent theatrical conductor, he is hardly a sensitive one. I prefer Erede. The smaller roles are acceptably filled. The recording is full-bodied and richly realistic with one engineering flaw—the level of the sound on side 2 is higher than on the others. —P.H.R.

PUCCINI: *Manon Lescaut* (Opera in 4 Acts); Licia Albanese (Manon), Robert Merrill (Lescaut), Jussi Bjoerling (des Grieux), Franco Calabrese (Geronte) and Sergeant), Mario Carlin (Edmondo,

Dancing Master and Lamplighter), Plinio Clabassi (Innkeeper and Captain of the Navy), Anna Maria Rota (Hair Dresser), Orchestra and Chorus of the Opera House, Rome, Jonel Perlea (cond.). RCA Victor set LM-6116, 3 discs, \$11.94.

▲AT LONG LAST we have an opulent voiced Des Grieux. In the opera house this role has long been one of Bjoerling's most admired. Licia Albanese is a sweet-voiced and sympathetic Manon. Tebaldi has a more thrilling voice, but her Manon lacks the charm that Albanese still can convey in her more gentle manner of vocal acting. Some of the music taxes her vocal resources as indeed, in my estimation, it does Bjoerling's, but they give consistently sympathetic portrayals of the youthful lovers. Tebaldi and del Monaco are especially successful in the last act for their vehemence and dramatic intensity, but this tenor elsewhere misses too many of the finer points of the music with his vocal exuberance and consistently loud singing. Robert Merrill is a rich-voiced Lescaut, the best so far. I like Calabrese's subtle handling of Geronte. He seems to be a singularly gifted basso. The balance of the cast are competent, especially in their doubling-up in different roles.

The Cetra release does not stand up in comparison with this new set. Clara Petrella's Manon has its assets, but her tenor is a poor substitute for Bjoerling or del Monaco. The Roumanian conductor, Jonel Perlea, proves himself a highly proficient operatic leader, if not the most Italianate in perception. The recording is excellent, well-balanced and realistic. The Rome Opera House has always been a favored place of recording engineers.

—P.H.R.

ROSSINI: *Il Turco in Italia* (Opera Buffa in 2 Acts); Nicola Rossi-Lemeni (Il Turco Selim), Maria Meneghini Callas (Fiorella), Nicolai Gedda (Narciso), Jolanda Gardino (Zaida), Piero di Palma (Albazar), Franco Calabrese (Geronio), Mariano Stabile (Il Poeta), Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala, Gianandrea Gavazzeni (cond.). Angel set 3535 (5 sides) \$13.45 or \$8.70.

▲IN 1814, a year after Rossini wrote his successful *L'Italiana in Algeri* for Venice, he was commissioned to write an opera for the fall season of La Scala in Milan. For a plot, he chose an upside-down version of his previous opera which brought "an exotic suitor to Italy instead of sending an Italian heroine to an exotic country." Though he devised a score of many delightful selections, including a duet between the heroine and her husband which, says Francis Toye in his book on the composer, "must be accounted one of the most plastic and varied essays of the kind ever written by the composer," the opera was at first unsuccessful.

This is understandable, for *The Turk in Italy* has a complicated and somewhat ridiculous plot which is less amusing than *The Italian Woman in Algiers*. It deals mainly with the story of a notoriously unfaithful young wife who meets a wily Turk as he lands on a beach in Italy. The lady goes for the Turk in a big way and he for her. There is a poet in search of a story who helps the husband outwit the Turk in the end. There is an exiled Turkish maid who gets her countryman as a result of the poet's intrigue. It is all very preposterous but Rossini contrived to bring life to the tale with musical vitality, gaiety and even charm. There are some sagging sections but on the whole the opera makes for pleasingly light diversion.

The veteran baritone Mariano Stabile, as the poet, almost steals the show. Of the men, Franco Calabrese as the distraught husband is next best with his vocal assurance. Rossi-Lemeni makes a plausible, if mealy-mouthed Turkish gentleman. Maria Callas seems out of her element in opera buffa; her natural dramatic intensity belies her on occasion. On the whole, however, she sings well, though unevenly. Jolanda Gardino, as the Turkish girl who gets her man in the end, sings pleasantly. Nicolai Gedda in a small role is curiously self-effacing while Piero de Palma is just the opposite. Gavazzeni's conducting is completely competent but lacking in the subtlety and sparkle of Giulini's performance of *The Italian Woman in Algiers*.

The recording lacks much of the brilliancy of the former release, yet the sound is good in terms of modern engineering.

—P.H.R.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Mozart and Salieri* (Opera in 1 Act—complete); Mark Reizen (bass), Ivan Kozlovsky (tenor) and the Orchestra and Chorus of the Bolshoi Theatre conducted by Samuel Samosud. Colosseum CRLP-10420, \$3.98.

▲NO ONE seriously believes that Salieri poisoned Mozart. I don't think Pushkin believed it, either, but anything goes in an allegory. And the little opera that Rinsky fashioned from this tale is probably even more far-fetched than the original. I had once an Oceanic recording of it, but it is not at hand for comparative purposes. If memory serves, however, I can say with certainty that the sound is about the same on both discs—inferior. The singing here is something else again. Reizen especially was in splendid voice when this performance was recorded. He cuts through the haze of surface noise like a buoy bell through fog. At the end he throws in a brace of encores ranging from Borodin to Beethoven, all of them impressively sung. —J.L.

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**BERLIOZ:** *Symphonie fantastique*; RCA Victor LP disc LM-1900, \$3.98.  
**RAVEL:** *Daphnis et Chloe*; RCA Victor LP disc LM-1893, \$3.98. Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch with New England Conservatory Chorus (in Ravel).

▲CHARLES MUNCH, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the RCA Victor engineers have covered themselves with glory by these two new releases—landmarks in the history of the phonograph, I believe they must be dubbed—now or later.

When Koussevitzky resigned as leader of the Bostonians over five seasons ago, music-loving New Englanders immediately sensed the passing of a grand era. Twenty-five years' influence of such a powerful personality as Koussevitzky did not augur well for successor Munch. (Many will remember the fate of conductors after Toscanini with the New York Philharmonic.) Though Munch had impressive credentials as one of the fine conductors of his generation, his path—both in Boston and in the hearts and minds of gramophiles—figured to be a hard one. It was and, in some ways, still is. Especially this is true of the gramophiles. It is perhaps no news that interest in the majority of the Munch-Boston issues has been lukewarm. Those who know Munch's work well know why. RCA Victor, with few exceptions, has until recently shied away from the repertory that Munch plays as well as anyone alive.

Now Munch is a notoriously erratic conductor. If he is really interested in a score, he gets excited about it. One of the hallmarks of Munch's conducting, indeed, is his personal hysteria. When he keeps this element under control, one encounters an "impersonal" passion which can reveal the essence of a score in an electrifying manner. If, on the other hand, Munch is not particularly interested in a piece of music (for example, a composition he is playing merely to please the subscribers), the results can verge on the disastrous. The one consistent factor in Munch's

# Charles Munch Plays Berlioz and Ravel

work (and I have studied it rather closely) is his ability to blend and balance sound with taste. Even when he goes wrong with a work (as any conductor does from time to time), this sonic ingredient is almost invariably reliable in quality.

Just as frequent attendance at Boston concerts points up Munch's erraticism, so do the majority of his records. And until now, record listeners unfortunately have had but few examples of Munch's best work: Berlioz' *Damnation of Faust*, Honegger's *Symphonies Nos. 2 and 5*, Roussel's *Bacchus et Ariane Suite No. 2*. One hopes that these latest releases will stimulate in Munch's art and skill and curiosity for that repertory in which he is distinguished and that they will in addition revive appreciation for the almost unique timbre of one of the world's greatest orchestras. Playing as it does in Ravel's *Daphnis* and in Berlioz' *Fantastique*, the Boston sounds—to borrow a well-worn phrase—like "the world's greatest orchestra." The works performed are two of the foundation blocks of the Munch repertory.

Since he arrived in this country, Munch has made the *Fantastique* a specialty. I have heard him direct the work a number of times with several orchestras. It has been invariably well proportioned tonally, enormously exciting, and on occasion somewhat unfaithful to Berlioz' directions—mostly as regards tempi. The record he has made retains all the thrilling qualities one is familiar with, presented this time with a degree of control that leaves one speechless, and is furthermore characterized by an unusual fidelity to Berlioz' indications. I dare say that only the pedantic carper will object to the little accelerations in the first movement and the more-than-conventional rapidity of the brilliant Witches Sabbath, for their effect is kin to the heat this music's expression gives off.

A word now about the recording itself and that of the *Daphnis*, which I shall write of shortly. The word is, of course, "magnificent." For this taste, the sound

is natural to one's memory of listening to the Boston Symphony Orchestra from around the tenth row orchestra of a big concert hall with appealingly resonant acoustics. There is plentiful detail, but nothing is given undue prominence. The climaxes are full and easy (and with the *Fantastique* and the *Daphnis*, that's something); the pianissimi are feathery. In short, the "new orthophonic" technique has established a level of quality which will be difficult to exceed.

To appreciate fully Ravel's evocative masterwork one must turn to the complete score with its choral parts. For years one seldom heard anything but the two suites the composer reluctantly drew from the complete *Daphnis et Chloe*, but lately we have had two recordings of the full score—one from Ansermet and the Suisse Romande, the other from Dorati and the Minneapolis. The Ansermet was notable for leadership; the Dorati, for good sound. The new Munch version has both virtues in abundance and should stand as the definitive issue for a number of years. The tonal characteristics of the Boston Symphony Orchestra are ideally suited to *Daphnis*, and Munch has manipulated them in a way that might have brought tears to Ravel's eyes. As sheer sound the performance is a triumph; as linear architecture, as emotional communication, it is perhaps a bit more. Each phrase is outlined distinctly and given a chance to exhale its magic, each dovetails with the next to create an increasing impetus that grips the listener's attention from beginning to end. Among so many outstanding moments, one must cite the savagery of the *Danse guerrière*, the steady sweep of the magical *Lever du jour*, and the intoxicating abandon of the finale—*Danse générale*. It is tempting to say that this record and its issue-mate offer the most exciting orchestral performances and the most thrilling sound one has heard from a phonograph. But let us yield not to temptation and merely state that these records are the stuff of which history is made. —C. J. Luten

# MUSIC FROM SCANDINAVIA

**LUMBYE:** *Dances from Trivoli—Britta and Vauxhall Polkas, Bouquet Royal Galop, Hesperus, Cecilia and Krolls Ballklange Waltzes, and Dream Pictures Fantasia;* Tivoli Concert Hall Orchestra conducted by Tippe Lumbye. Mercury MG-90000, \$4.98.

**HALVORSEN:** *Suite Ancienne, Fossegrimen Suite* (Music of Modern Norway, Vol. 3); the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Oivin Fjeldstad. Mercury MG-90001, \$4.98.

**BRAEIN:** *Concert Overture; OLSEN: 2 Edda Songs; JENSEN: Partita Sinfonica, "The Drove"; JOHANSEN: Pan—Symphonic Music, Op. 22; EGGEN: Excerpts from Olav Liljeckrans* (Music of Modern Norway, Vol. 4); Eva Prytz (soprano, in the Olsen), Bjarne Buntz (tenor, in the Eggen); and the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Odd Gruener-Hegge. Mercury MG-90002, \$4.98.

**GROVEN:** *Ballad for Chorus and Orchestra; EGGE: Piano Concerto No. 2;* the Oslo University Choral Society, Hugo Kramm conducting, and Robert Rieffling (piano), respectively, with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Oivin Fjeldstad. Mercury MG-90003, \$4.98.

**SVENDSEN:** *Norwegian Rhapsodies, No. 2 and No. 3; Symphony No. 2 in B Flat;* the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Oivin Fjeldstad and Odd Gruener-Hegge. Mercury MG-90004, \$4.98.

▲**ANOTHER** surfeit of imports from the north. The frothy waltzes and what-not by Denmark's Hans Christian Lumbye (1810-1874) form a sequel to Mercury's earlier MG-10130. The conductor, being the composer's grandson, presumably elicits definitive performances. Quite pleasant listening, and the more when you remember that the preponderance of this music was written well before Johann Strauss II got under way. The *Dream Pictures* is used by the Royal Danish Ballet and it is, indeed, eminently choreographic; all of the other pieces were contrived for ballroom use, and I see no reason why some of them couldn't be supplanted for the ubiquitous Viennese danceables once in a while.

All of the composers represented here-with were, or are, Norwegian. The most immediately apprehensible of them, perhaps, would be Johan Halvorsen (1864-

1935). His *Suite Ancienne* is a lovely memorial to the 18th-century writer Ludvig Holberg (as is the better known *From Holberg's Time* of Grieg). Its forms are the idealized dances of the late baroque, so that the work overall rather suggests Bach or Handel on a Scandinavian holiday. The stunning feature of the *Fossegrimen* music, written to accompany that drama, is its use of the so-called Hardanger fiddle—which employs four sympathetic strings under the four that the bow contracts, the two sets respectively tuned to D-E-F sharp-A and A-D-A-E.

The third recording listed assembles a potpourri by Edvard Fliflet Braein (b. 1924), Sparre Olsen (b. 1903), Ludvig Irgens Jensen (b. 1894), David Monrad Johansen (b. 1888), and Arne Eggen (b. 1881). The Jensen work, like the Egge concerto to which I will proceed in a moment, has been heard in New York. The others are completely unfamiliar. All are folkloristic, and none provides much tangible evidence of any strong individuality. Also, however, they are uniformly short samples except for the Johansen, which is the most conservative of the lot. Jensen's *Partita* is a substantial work, perhaps the only one among these that holds promise of reward for subsequent listening. But then it's not easy to be objective when you keep hearing Grieg in everything.

Eivind Groven (b. 1901) does not impress one as original, but there is no gainsaying the appeal of his vigorous naiveté. His *Ballad*, dating from the early 30s, is a setting of an old folk tale that has to do with a farm girl who is taken into thrall by mountain giants while her family's menfolk are away at war. As far as it is possible to follow the unfolding text from the English paraphrase printed on the sleeve, Groven seems to have contrived a powerfully direct and dramatic work. Its coupling, played by the same pianist who brought it to New York three seasons ago, surely is among the finest concertos in the modern repertory. Klaus Egge (b. 1906) writes in a delightfully detached neoclassic style that manages, at the same time, to embrace the unmistakable aspects of his determinedly unsophisticated cultural legacy. His piano writing is idiomatic, his resources of motor energy seemingly unlimited. And he knows enough not to distend a good tune. More of Egge, please.

Johan Svendsen (1840-1911) almost always gets the "derivative" tag hung on his work because it is so "reminiscent" of Brahms and Dvorak. The fact is that it was "prophetic", rather, at least insofar as Svendsen had two symphonies behind him before the more eminent Europeans ever brought out their respective firsts. Having thus done him justice, however, it must be conceded that Svendsen's music doesn't have much of anything to call its own, and that for all its felicities it leaves

the listener with no tonic after-effect. The earmarks of genius are in these scores, to be sure, but it is not unreasonable to say that Svendsen never consolidated his gifts with his gains. In short, there is nothing personal, no sign of a commanding presence, in their easygoing, glibly formal pages. Grieg was right. "I weep inwardly", he once wrote, "when I think what he is and what he might have been..."

It needs to be added, although it nearly goes without saying at this point in Mercury's history, that the several recordings are sonically the equal of any I have heard that were taped outside our shores.

—JAMES LYONS

## CONCERT HALL WALTZES

**A PORTRAIT OF THE WALTZ:** *Danse macabre* (Saint-Saëns), *Valse triste* (Sibelius), *Die Schlittenfahrt* (Mozart), *Tanzwalzer* (Busoni), *Mephisto Waltz* (Liszt), *Valse de sylphes* from *Le Damnation de Faust* (Berlioz), *Valse* from *Suite No. 2* (Stravinsky), and *Fête Polonoise* from *Le Roi malgré lui* (Chabrier); the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Igor Markevitch. Angel 35154, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THE Busoni piece is a knockout and I marvel at its having been kept so long out of circulation. Hearing the Mozart gem, which I used to treasure on the odd side of a shellac album, I am suddenly reminded that the wonder of LP nevertheless denies us the many smaller pleasures of standard repertory—and more importantly of the obscure little masterworks that are destined to remain obscure simply because they are little. Nothing new in this notion, of course, but it did rather jolt me to realize that I hadn't come across that Mozart miniature for a matter of seven years. (Yes, I must ruefully admit that I parted with almost all of my 78s in the early days of micro-groove.) I still don't approve of such hodge-podges as we are presented here-with, although I have no other, more practical suggestions. What we face constantly is the problem of whether or not to buy a whole album just to get one performance. Now, as to the one at hand I find a third item—the Stravinsky—that would attract the sophisticated listener even if he should own the extant and rather second-rate recording of the complete suites. The other works are all of them coupled elsewhere, several times over. What to do? I can add only that Markevitch is a brilliant conductor, the Philharmonia one of the best orchestras in the world, and the recorded sound simply stunning.

—J.L.

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# Notes and Reviews

**T**HREE IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

## ORCHESTRA

**BECHET-TOLIVER:** *La Nuit est une sorcière*; an unidentified symphony orchestra conducted by Jacques Bazire. London International WV-91050, \$2.98.

▲YES, the Bechet herewith is none other than that old jazz man Sidney, the soprano saxophonist of them all. Having removed his venue to France, the erstwhile king of Dixielanders now has taken to longhair. The results are guaranteed to traumatize any admirer of the Bechet of yore. This work, "arranged by James Toliver" presumably from a skeleton score, is the music for a ballet (book by André Coffrant) that has to do with a murderous young sonnambulist and his equally murderous valet. Naturally the soprano sax is featured, and the soloist in this recording is guess who? That's right. Musically, I must say, this cliché grab-bag holds nothing of any viable substance. But the scream of Sidney's horn comes through every once in a while—almost always with the same figure—and no one can deny that there isn't a sound like it in all the wide world. Still, he should have known better than to mess around where he was just a square cornball. Come back to us, Sidney. Your old stuff, in its way, is a lot closer to being art.

—J.L.

**BERLIOZ:** *Romeo and Juliet—Great Festivities in Capulet's Palace, Love Scene and Queen Mab Scherzo*; Charles Munch conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra; **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Romeo and Juliet—Overture-Fantasia*; Guido Cantello conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra; **PROKOFIEV:** *Romeo and Juliet—Excerpts from Suites 1, 2, and 3*; Leopold Stokowski conducting Members of the NBC Symphony Orchestra; **SHAKESPEARE:** *Romeo and Juliet—Scenes from the Play*; Geraldine Brooks, Blanche Yurka, Hurd Hatfield. RCA Victor set LM-6028, 2 discs, \$7.96.

▲RCA Victor's Director of Artists and Repertoire, George R. Marek, has long been an enthusiastic student of Shakespeare, and this set, in the parlance of the trade, is his "baby." His booklet reveals his knowledge and love of the Bard of Avon. His musical selections are well

chosen. The Munch and Cantello performances, already released, have had their share of critical endorsement. Cantello's Tchaikovsky is a fine performance with vigor and dramatic fervor, recorded with thrilling dynamics. The feature of this set is Stokowski's beautiful sounding absorption with some of the best excerpts from Prokoviev's ballet—*Romeo at the Fountain*; *Juliet*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Romeo at the Tomb of Juliet* and *Death of Juliet*. This less ubiquitous music, based on the familiar story, is most welcome. It makes one wish that the conductor had recorded the three sets in their entirety, for definitely Stokowski reveals a flair for this music. The final side brings us spoken scenes from the play itself—the Balcony Scene from Act I, three scenes between Juliet and the Nurse from Acts II and III, and the scene from Act III where the lovers bid farewell. The redeeming feature of this fourth side of the set is the vocal acting of the veteran Blanche Yurka. She alone knows how to interpret Shakespeare. Neither Geraldine Brooks nor Hurd Hatfield are, to the manner born, Shakespearean exponents—they are too sentimental and given to false dramatics. The recording is excellent in the first three sides, but strangely at a low level in the last side.

—P.H.R.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 3 in E flat, Op. 55*; Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1899, \$3.98.

▲WHAT a happy thought Victor had: let Reiner record a classical Viennese symphony. And what an opportunity for us! Reiner is one of the great living conductors, one of the very few, incidentally, who knows what a classical orchestra is and how it was meant to sound. Victor's superb recording makes one aware of this fact almost immediately. Reiner's *Eroica* is lean, swift, but with enough ease to allow the music to breathe. It is clear, beautiful of sound (how splendidly the Chicago Orchestra plays these days), and a trifle cold in expression. It has not the blaze of Toscanini nor the warmth of Furtwängler (neither of these are well recorded) but it is nevertheless an effective statement of the score and with such faithful sound perhaps the best all-round *Eroica* now available.

—C.J.L.

**BONDEVILLE:** *Madame Bovary* (Symphonic Suite); *Les Illuminations* (Symphonic Poems); *L'Orchestre National Belge* conducted by Georges Sebastian. London International TW-91023, \$4.00.

▲AMONG living French composers, we are told in the notes herewith, "there are several that cannot be easily classified as products of the Paris Conservatoire or Schola Cantorum, nor yet as the disciples of any one powerfully influential teacher. One such is Emmanuel Bondeville, who was born in Rouen in 1898". That is surely a most tactful way of saying that the music presented on this omnibus recording has no character whatever. Eclectic it is not, and neither is it original. It is simply dull. The *Madame Bovary* suite is an orchestral distillate of an opera score. The larger work has enjoyed a certain popularity in France. Perhaps the music is effective in context. In précis, even with a synopsis of the libretto (after Flaubert) in hand, it seems to roll on endlessly, making no points at all enroute. It is rather fun to contrast *Les Illuminations* with the much more familiar Britten work of the same title. Be apprised, however, that only the first movement (*Marine*) is based programmatically on that Rimbaud collection. The two others, *Ophélie* and *Bal de Pendus*, are straight take-offs on two of the poet's childhood efforts. I would call this pre-Raphaelite music, and if that means nothing to you I can only add that the music is too disembodied for my apprehension. The foregoing is a sample of the kind of pseudo-criticism I detest, but it's the best I can do with this slender material. Sound is adequate; performances apparently likewise.

—J.L.

**BRAHMS:** *Violin Concerto, Op. 77*; Jascha Heifetz (violin) and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner. RCA Victor LM-1903, \$3.98.

▲THIS is one of those recordings that will inspire love and hate in about equal proportion. The taste exhibited by both soloist and conductor cannot but infuriate adherents of the *Gemuetlich* Brahms. The virtuosity that is manifest, nevertheless, is irrevocably a marvel and a monument. Reiner's tempi from the beginning are much faster than you have ever heard; certainly he shows a cavalier disregard for the *non troppo* injunction. But his orchestra is magnificently responsive, and no mistake about that. Heifetz never, ever, has displayed more of his incredible mastery. There are moments when you simply cannot believe your ears, so nearly perfect is his intonation throughout a passage of enormous difficulty. But again, his slithering quite often goes well beyond the bounds of violinistic etiquette. Unless, that is, you are willing to rationalize about the composer's known predilection for gypsy style. This is a rather

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cord Guide

ticklishly subjective matter. I notice that the program annotator, Claudia Cassidy of *The Chicago Tribune*, sandbags herself with that charming anecdote about the composer's reaction to Nikisch's conducting of this work: "So—it can be done that way, too." Deponent further sayeth not, except that the recorded sound is all that anyone could desire. But don't forget the superb Martzy or Milstein performances, which I cannot. —J.L.

**CIMAROSA:** *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra*; **TARTINI** (trans. Bonelli): *Concerto No. 58 in F major*; **ULLY** (arr. Mottl); *Ballet Suite*; Scarlatti Orchestra conducted by Franco Caraciolo. Angel 35255, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THE Cimarosa concerto is a lovely work, already known to most of us in excellent performances by Leon Goossens (ML-4782) and Mitchell Miller (Mercury 10003). The oboist here, Sidney Gallesi, is a fine artist but not quite the equal of Goossens or Miller, but he enjoys better recording. Though the Goossens version is the not too well recorded, I favor it. The Tartini is an attractive work of its kind, probably an improvement of the original score, but it is overshadowed by both the Cimarosa and the Lully. I have always admired Felix Mottl's orchestral suites of Gluck and Lully, and I am glad to have this recording (a first, I believe) of the latter. The Scarlatti Orchestra is a suave group, well conducted by its talented leader. The recording is well balanced and soundwise pleasing.

—P.H.R.

**DEBUSSY:** *Images—Gigues, Iberia and Rondes de printemps*; the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by Eduard van Beinum. Epic LC-3147, \$3.98.

▲ONE of the really incredible situations in standard recorded repertory has been straightened out at last. Frankly, I have to admit that I did not expect van Beinum to come through as swimmingly as he did with this demanding assignment. No conductor since Monteux, in the forties, has approached these wonderful pieces as a set, and even Monteux, attuned though he undeniably is to the scores, could not get the San Franciscans to play them in proper fashion. In this new recording—remarkably the first in five years—everything is put right. You would swear that van Beinum is a Frenchman, and that the Concertgebouw a transfigured Parisian orchestra. Every nuance, however subtle or essentially Gallic, is right where it belongs. And the recorded sound is beautiful—a bit, just a bit, bass-heavy, but no matter. As to *Iberia* I can believe that many will continue to prefer Toscanini's performance, or for quite different reasons Ingelbrecht's. But taken altogether there is

no competition, not even from Ansermet, whose omnibus version is as old as LP itself.

—J.L.

**FRENCH MODERNS:** *Suite dans le Gout Espagnol* (Roland-Manuel); *Suite d'après Corrette* (Milhaud); *Caprice sur des Airs Danois et Russes* (Saint-Saëns); *Rhapsodie* (Honegger); and *Trio* (Poulenc); the Berkshire Ensemble (James Pappoutsakis, flute; Louis Speyer, oboe; Pasquale Cardillo, clarinet; Ernst Panenka, bassoon; and Harold Meek, French horn) with Roger Voisin (trumpet), Bernard Zighera (piano), and Daniel Pinkham (harpsichord). Unicorn UNLP-1005, \$3.98.

▲THE contemporary French wind literature is full of engaging little near-masterworks. Unicorn assembles five of them, each written for a different combination, on this exceedingly attractive disc. It is good at last to have Roland-Manuel represented, however modestly, in our catalogues; his music is conservative but expressively to the point and always in the best of taste. Milhaud's piece makes its LP bow simultaneously another version, reviewed separately. The Saint-Saëns trifles are impeccably made but rather too facile to hold one's attention all the way through. Honegger's Debussyean *Rhapsodie* is heard in a revised instrumentation, featuring the oboe, which was prepared by the composer at the request of the oboist in this recording. Poulenc's *Trio* is one of his most mischievous romps. Altogether a well balanced program, if not "modern" by any stretch of that admittedly flexible term (Saint-Saëns wrote his *Caprice* in 1887). All of the participants save the gifted Pinkham are, I think, members of the Boston Symphony, which has been *nonpareil* in woodwind matters since the early Koussevitzky days. So that the several performances are quite beyond reproach. Nice sound.

—J.L.

**GINASTERA:** *Variaciones Concertantes*;

**BRITTEN:** *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*; the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Antal Dorati. Mercury MG-50047, \$4.98.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Nutcracker Suite*, Op. 71-a; **BRITTEN:** *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*; Deems Taylor (narration) and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Antal Dorati. Mercury MG-50055, \$4.98.

▲TOUCHING all bases except home, as it were, Mercury gives us the Britten piece *sans* the original commentary and, alternately, with a much revised one delivered by Deems Taylor. In the latter case, it is coupled with tape snips from the complete *Nutcracker* that are themselves interpolated with commentary. As a faithful fan of Taylor's in those long-ago days when he was the intermission regular for the N. Y. Philharmonic's

weekly broadcasts, I must admit that it was a pleasure, one time around, to hear that familiar voice again. And no doubt the kiddie market will like this disc in a big way. As music appreciation items go, it is first class. Ginastera's work, dating from 1953, is a suffusion of Argentine character (he says) through a dozen clever variations on an original theme. I do not understand what is Argentine about the score, but it is a knockout for its virtuosic exploitation of orchestral resources. Dorati limns it with stunning effect. He shows off his men to superb advantage in the Britten, too, but it is a pity that this coupling was chosen when there are already a number of versions around, the most musical being van Beinum's on London. Mercury's sound is characteristically surcharged throughout.

—J.L.

**HINDEMITH:** *Nobilissima Visione* (Concert Suite from the Ballet, *St. Francis*);

**BRAHMS:** *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*; Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Otto Klemperer. Angel 35221, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲POST-WAR recordings made by Klemperer in Vienna did not do justice to him soundwise. This record from Angel is wonderfully realistic. Klemperer is an exacting artist, with a firm grip at all times on the orchestral reins, but seldom at the expense of lyricism or beauty in sound. The Hindemith score is exceptionally well performed with a clarity of line and detail that not all conductors achieve. Only Ormandy has performed it previously on records, but Klemperer lifts the music on a higher plane than his predecessor especially in the final Hymn of Praise which ends in a blaze of orchestral splendor. Klemperer's performance of the Brahms work is equally persuasive and as good as any extant, which includes Toscanini's, Furtwängler's and Walter's. Let us hope that Angel permits this great conductor to record more Brahms, and by all means some more Mahler. —P.H.R.

**MENDELSSOHN:** *Symphony No. 4 in A, Op. 90 (Italian)*; the Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Westminster W-LAB 7008, \$7.50.

▲TIME has overtaken the old Koussevitzky performance, which has always seemed to me the exemplar. Toscanini certainly has its merits, a coupling with the *Reformation* being enough to win it many adherents. I rather incline to the Beecham, but reviewers, too, are subject to couplingitis—in this instance a Beethoven *Eighth* that is to my mind the last word. Boult, now, addresses himself to the sturdier aspects of the score. This reflects the historical and continuing affection in which England holds Mendelssohn; it adored him above all other European composers, never imagined

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—J.L.

**MOZART:** *Symphony No. 30 in D, K. 202; Serenade No. 13 in G, K. 525 (Eine kleine Nachtmusik)*; Josef Keilberth conducting the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra. Telefunken LGX-66025, \$4.98.

▲KEILBERTH is a knowing musician who imparts his wishes to the players in a way to assure freedom of spirit without losing control. His performance of the Symphony is to be preferred to the one sponsored by Oiseau-Lyre (reviewed in August) because his phrasing is more expressive and more clearly detailed. Moreover, the recording though realistically full-bodied and appreciable for its clarity of line is clearer and less weighted. This work has some characteristics of a divertimento, the emphasis being on entertainment, as Saint-Foix has said. But what delightful entertainment this symphony is, even to the "buffoonery" in the finale. Mozart must have had a twinkle in his eye when he wrote it and a feeling of elative exhilaration. In like manner, this adroit conductor gives the familiar *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* a well-ordered and deftly nuanced performance. His choice of tempo for opening movement (*Allegro molto*) shuns a stress on the *molto* which can result in loss of grace and nuance in phraseology. There is elegance and orderliness in his performance and no striving for effects that the composer has not indicated. Particularly impressive is his slow movement and the finale. The recording characteristics are comparable to those in the symphony. —P.H.R.

**QUANTZ-WEISSENBORN:** *Flute Concerto in G; GLUCK-SCHERCHEN: Flute Concerto in G; GLUCK: Dance of the Spirits from Orphée et Eurydice*; **MOZART:** *Andante in C, K. 315* for flute and strings; Hubert Barwahser (flute) and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bernhard Paumgartner. Epic LC-3134, \$3.98.

▲THE two major works, as you can guess from the hyphenated listings above, are not heard in anything like their original form. Quantz wrote something over 300 flute concertos; I trust that some of them are more edifying than this one. Scherchen has put lots of juice into the Gluck original (mostly horns) and it really comes off with fine effect. The famous operatic

excerpt apparently is one or another of the standard concert editions. The Mozart is performed as composed. Taken altogether this disc makes pretty painless listening, but not unless you have a book or something to hold your attention. As a demonstration of flute virtuosity, of course, it is quite another matter. Barwahser is an accomplished technician and he plays throughout with an elegance of style that will command the awe of professionals. Paumgartner provides expert orchestral support, deferent only when the soloist is front and center. Impressive sound, just a bit more bass-heavy than it should be. —J.L.

**MASSENET:** *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in E flat; ANDRE-BLOCH: Concerto-Ballet for Piano and Orchestra*; Sondra Bianca with the Philharmonia Orchestra of Hamburg, Hans-Jürgen Walther (cond.). MGM E3178, \$3.98.

▲IT IS doubtful that many know Massenet wrote, late in life, a piano concerto that is a graceful, melodious work albeit not an intellectual effort. Though he composed it in 1903, Massenet at 61 was looking backward, not forward. This concerto is a delicately lyrical work of prevailing sentimentality with sweeping runs and figurations in its outer movements, wholly romantic in concept. What little dramatic intensity exists is in the second movement which owns no true depth of feeling. The instrumentation is well devised, but the pianist is ever present. Much of the piano part has its singing lines, for Massenet was a singer's composer. "Overall, the piece is untroubled in its gentle, gracious movement," says the annotator, but the "magical developments of memorable melody and effect," of which he speaks, eluded me.

Andre-Bloch is a new composer to these ears but I know that he has been around quite some time. The record jacket tells us: "He is one of the most influential of French teachers, his compositions are played widely, and he appears frequently in conducting engagements. . . He helped found the famous Fontainebleau School and taught composition there for many years." He also served as Minister of Fine Arts in the Ministry of Education for 30 years before the Germans occupied France in the last war. Quite a formidable background. Judging from his *Concerto-Ballet*, Andre-Bloch is gifted musician with no radical ideas.

Utilizing recognizably traditional harmonic textures, he has devised a diverting work that is rational, ingenuous and not without humor in its outer movements. The latter are based on dancelike rhythms. Only the second movement with its melancholic tinge, reminds us that he wrote this opus in 1943.

Sondra Bianca is an American pianist who has won much recognition in Europe recently. Her performances are smooth

and technically adroit, bespeaking an assured artist. The conductor gives her admirable cooperation and support and the Hamburg orchestra plays well. The recording is excellent, with not too much reverberation to obscure the clarity of instrumentation.

—P.H.R.

**STRAVINSKY:** *Symphony No. 1 in E Flat, Op. 1*; the Vienna Orchestral Society conducted by F. Charles Adler. Unicorn UNLP-1006, \$3.98.

▲LET no man say that the evolution of musical genius is not a strange and wonderful phenomenon. That *Firebird* could follow this utterly traditional and mostly undistinguished symphony by a mere two years, give or take a few months, simply is incredible. There is no first symphony in the entire literature that offers, in comparison with its sequels, so many or such startling contrasts and so little genetic evidence of what was to come. True, Stravinsky has insisted that the beginner must "accept a discipline from without, but only as a means of obtaining freedom for, and strengthening himself in, his personal method of expression". And many a composer's *Op. 1* discloses a slavish devotion to his teacher. But we are astonished, nevertheless, to hear from Stravinsky a piece that might easily have been written by Rimsky-Korsakov. Aside from a scherzo of extraordinary (if orthodox) effectiveness, this score is nothing but "the kind of work which rates an A-plus in a conservatory", as Klaus George Roy remarks in his notes. Roy is one of our most creative annotators and this challenging sort of assignment elicits his best; I would question only his retrospective prescience in saying that the "rebellion against the 19th century...had not yet begun in Stravinsky's mind at the time". Surely it must have, even if it were not yet manifest. Or was it? You must hear the piece yourself, anyway; conscience demands that. I was especially pleased that Roy came across and did not hesitate to quote from a 1916 review by H. K. Motherwell in the old Boston *Transcript*, that now forgotten newspaper that remains even today the richest repository of music criticism in American history. Unicorn is to be congratulated for its enterprise all around: Adler gives us an excellent performance, or so it seems in the absence of a score, and the recorded sound is on par with the best imports.

—J.L.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Swan Lake* (Acts 2 and 3); Members of the NBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1894, \$3.98.

▲DURING this uneven performance one comes across four sections that are miraculous for dramatic tension, glowing tonal textures, and fidelity to the spirit of Tchaikovsky's ever remarkable ballet

score. It took imagination to make these numbers (the penultimate number in Act 2 and the first three in Act 3) unforgettable, fresh, and vibrant. But there is another side to the coin. The Stokowski imagination has led him to make other numbers lurid, to try tonal balances and eccentricities of rhythm and tempi that make any sustained listening pleasure impossible. If you are looking for *Swan Lake* excerpts on one record, you must decide whether you want the uneven Stokowski product or the fine, even, but routine performance of Robert Irving (Bluebird LP).

—C.J.L.

**TOSCANINI OMNIBUS:** *Carmen Suite No. 1* (Bizet); *Don Pasquale*—Overture (Donizetti); *La Forza del Destino*—Overture (Verdi); Overtures to *Oberon*, *Euryanthe* and *Der Freischütz* (Weber); *Prelude to Hansel and Gretel* (Humperdinck); *Mignon*—Overture (Thomas); *La Wally*—Prelude to Act 4 and *Lorelei*—Dance of the Water Nymphs (Catalani); *Poet and Peasant*—Overture (von Suppé); *Kamarinskaya* (Glinka); *Romeo and Juliet*—Queen Mab Scherzo and Damnation of Faust—*Rakoczy March* (Berlioz); Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor set LM-6026, 2 discs, \$7.96.

▲ SOME of these selections have been previously released on 10" discs. Some have been long awaited, like the overtures to *La Forza* and *Euryanthe*, the Catalani pieces and the *Poet and Peasant*, for which Toscanini has shown a particular flair. There is not a disappointing performance in this omnibus though some, like myself may have other preferences like Beecham's more idiomatic *Carmen Suite* and the soundwise beauty of Ormandy's *Freischütz*. But the magic of Toscanini's baton holds the listener's undivided attention in all, despite the hodge-podge program, momentarily retarding memories of others. Toscanini has always been a wholly persuasive man of the theatre, where he began his career. The last four selections (side 4) are the only ones soundwise that are not top-drawer recordings, but even these are satisfying for the orchestral sorcery of the conductor. The Glinka dates back 15 years, but the deft detailing lends fascination to the performance, and the 1951 Berlioz *Romeo and Juliet* scherzo, with its delicacy and perception, offers an experience that no other recording of this work provides. Despite the date, the famous *crescendo* comes off to perfection. When will we have Toscanini's incomparable complete performance of the entire work, which he performed in two NBC Broadcasts? Soundwise this excerpt may not be all one could ask but it will meet with the approval of many rather than the few, for this *sotto-voce* music emerges from the record as gossamer and tidy as a spider's web. Far less satisfactory is the Berlioz

March. A word should be said for RCA Victor's engineering in these older selections taken from air-checks. They are so clear and clean that one forgets about hi-fi. Moreover, the quiet surfaces defer thoughts of the spinning disc—one might be tuning in on the broadcasts once again.

—P.H.R.

## CHAMBER MUSIC

**BEETHOVEN:** *Quintet in E flat for Piano and Winds, Op. 16*; *Sonata in F for Horn and Piano, Op. 17*; *Duo No. 3 in B flat for Clarinet and Bassoon*; Annie D'Arco (piano), Pierre Pierlot (oboe), Jacques Lancelot (clarinet), Gilbert Courrier (horn), Paul Hongne (bassoon). Oiseau-Lyre-London OL 50033, \$4.98.

▲ RECENTLY we had a virtuoso performance of the *Quintet* by Serkin and leading players of the Philadelphia Orchestra, which was deservedly praised. It remains a brilliant show of its kind, to which one could hardly fail to be attracted again and again. But these French musicians approach this music with more intimacy of style, and a feeling appropriate to a chamber opus of this genre. Those who like their chamber music in an intimate setting will favor this performance, which is less reverberant in its reproduction, more in keeping with "room music" which is just what chamber music is. The *Horn Sonata* is well played, but I prefer the richer tone of a German horn in this work. The *Duo for Clarinet and Bassoon* is an early work of Beethoven and, one suspects, a study in instrumental combinations for the wind-band of the Elector. It does not sustain interest.

—P.H.R.

**DEBUSSY:** *Sonata in G Minor; La plus que lente; Il pleure sans mon cœur; Minstrels*; **FAURE:** *Sonata No. 1 in A*; Jan Tomasow (violin) and Franz Herotschek (piano). Vanguard VRS-464, \$4.98.

▲ TOMASOW has been heard as soloist in several orchestral recordings but this disc represents his recital début on LP. It establishes his virtuoso standing beyond question. More's the pity that he chose to take on the formidable competition that confronts him in both of these sonatas. If it happens that you are looking for them in tandem, there is no problem because they are not coupled elsewhere. Each is more compatibly matched on other labels, however, for example the Debussy with its two companion sonatas and the Fauré with its immediate sequel on Westminster. Without regard to the feasibility of Vanguard's coupling there is nothing negative to report. Those who ask a certain astringency of sound in the French repertory will not be pleased; Tomasow has a strong bow arm, the better

to lay on his big, bushy tone. But to these ears the resulting opulence does no disservice to the music. The encores are exquisitely turned out. Strong collaboration from Herotschek. Good, close-up engineering.

—J.L.

**LECLAIR:** *Eight Sonatas for Flute and Continuo*; Jean-Pierre Rampal and Robert Veyron-Lacroix. Oiseau-Lyre-London OL-50050/51, \$9.96.

▲ IT IS rather a surprise to find that Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764), whom Grove's says "must be accorded the first place among French writers for the violin," is only represented by one work in the LP catalogue. It would be pleasant to welcome this set, in which the French flutist Rampal plays so tastefully, but some of these sonatas are familiar to me, and I am sure to others, in violin performances, and I must say that I prefer the string instrument to the flute. The latter becomes rather tedious in character after two or three of these works.

I think the fault lies in unrelieved coloration of the flute. Rampal's tone is clear and poised but his lack of vibrato makes for monotony.

Rampal has a competent partner, who seems, however, a bit fussy in his harpsichord playing. Perhaps the use of a cello would have helped matters considerably, though I cannot remember when a cellist was employed in a performance of any Leclair sonatas played by a violinist, but musicologists inform us that the added instrument is in keeping with the tradition of the *basso continuo*. —P.H.R.

**RENAISSANCE and BAROQUE MUSIC for Lute and Guitar:** *Suite in D Minor* (De Visée); *Preamel* (Neusidler); *Pavane* (Milan); *Phantasia* (Waisel); *Partita in A Minor* (Logy); *Praeludium*; *Menuet, Sarabande and Menuet* (Weiss); and *Two Galliards* (Dowland); Karl Scheit (guitar). Vanguard/Bach Guild BG-548, \$4.98.

▲ ALL of this music is played on a modern six-string guitar, although it was originally written for its five-string counterpart or for the lute or vihuela. Nominal objection to this is obviated by Scheit's scholarly standing—he is a recognized authority on pre-classical music for plucked stringed instruments—and by the consummate taste that marks every last one of his performances. The pieces are every one of them a solace to harassed modern ears. In style they simulate the madrigal, the solo art song, and sometimes other instruments (the Dowland *Lachrimae*, from which these *Galliards* were excerpted, was written alternately for lute or five viols). The first time around they all sound the same, no matter such musical trivia, and when the dulcet disc is done you will doubtless put the stylus right back at the beginning again. That's how much a pleasure it is. Excellent sound. —J.L.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Serenade Melancolique*, Waltz Scherzo; **PROKOFIEV:** *Cinderella*—Waltz; Mikhail Vaiman (violin) and Maria Karanpasjova (piano). London 10" LP disc LD-9154, \$2.98.

▲THIS bill of fare is fresh, but it has few other virtues. It is not often we hear Tchaikovsky's two little studies for his violin concerto, and it is easy to see why they have been neglected. The Prokofiev is still somewhat new; it is from the wartime-produced ballet and is the composer's arrangement of the waltz Cinderella dances immediately after her entrance at the ball. The principal theme is good and quite characteristic of Prokofiev's unique melodic style, but the rest of the number's material and its manipulation I find arid and uninspired. Quite a bit of the ballet score, indeed, strikes me as being inferior Prokofiev. The playing of violinist Vaiman is mediocre; his handling of open tones in melodic lines is not especially skillful and his use of portamento is not invariably tasteful. The recording is top-drawer London with good balance between instruments.

—C.J.L.

**WALTON:** *Piano Quartet*; *Violin Sonata*; respectively the Robert Masters Pianoforte Quartet and Max Rostal (violin) with Colin Horsley (piano). Westminster WN or SWN-18024, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲WITH the arrival of his opera *Troilus and Cressida* in America this month—almost simultaneously in New York and San Francisco, at that—Sir William Walton may be said to have arrived himself as a prime musical personality of our time. In truth, of course, he has been writing good music for a long, long while, although the devoted efforts of Heifetz and Primrose have not been enough to popularize his superb concertos for violin and viola, respectively. Indeed, his name means nothing but *Facade* to most of musical America, which is a great pity. Now comes Westminster, which bravely (and I am sure unprofitably) offered his *Belshazzar's Feast* a couple of years back, with two chamber works that will certainly stand with his finest achievements when the final tally is taken. The *Piano Quartet* dates, if you please, from 1918. Quite properly it bespeaks the dilemma then confronting English music—the burgeoning folk revival of Vaughan Williams and Holst was not miscible with Stravinsky's influence from across the Channel. But the young Walton stirred them well, and the result, at least in the finale, was something new altogether. Even after three decades, the early Walton commands attention. Walton's style in the 20s and 30s tended to the angry and the shrill. By the late 40s, when he wrote the *Violin Sonata*, a certain philosophical air had found its way in, and the gentle,

chiding smile had replaced the mocking sneer. So that this recital is a sort of chronological cross-section of Walton's art, minus only those years in which his music was not, apparently, our cup of tea. The performances are exquisite, the sound likewise.

—J.L.

## KEYBOARD

**LISZT:** *Six Paganini Etudes*; *Three Concert Etudes*; Edith Farnadi (piano). Westminster WN or SWN-18017, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲IT is difficult not to be fond of those Liszt works which frankly exploit the piano's resources even when one finds many of the composer's more serious contributions something of a trial. Surely the outrageously difficult *Paganini Etudes* seem among the most enjoyable things Liszt produced when they are performed with assurance and dash. Much as I admire Miss Farnadi's understanding and love of the Liszt repertory and her fine musicality, I can hardly suggest that she gets everything out of the *Paganini Etudes*. She simply does not have sufficient technical or physical equipment. But she is, of course, not alone among today's pianists in this regard. Only a few ever master these works to the point where they can play them with ease and abandon. Farnadi is more satisfying in the concert etudes, where her lyricism piles up points. Most of this recording is an example of Westminster's best piano sound; it is clear and spacious at all times. The surfaces of my review copy were somewhat noisy, however, and two of the pieces were afflicted with rattles.

—C.J.L.

**MOZART:** *Sonata in B flat*, K.333; **SCARLATTI:** *Sonatas in C sharp minor* (L.256), in E (L.221), in C (L.202), in F (L.432), in D (L.107), in G (L.487); Charles Rosen (the Siena pianoforte). Esoteric ESP-3000, \$5.95.

▲THE NEWS about this issue is not its superb recording nor the serious and musical playing of Rosen. No, fine as these elements are, it is the instrument that triumphs over all and immediately wins our attention and our praise. The instrument is the Siena pianoforte. Recently restored by Avner Carmi (one-time piano tuner to Artur Schnabel), this instrument was originally built in the first decade of the 19th century by the Marchesio family of Turin. Legend has it that the wood in the piano came from the pillars of Solomon's temple. Whether it did or not, the case is clearly a fine one. I might add that the sounding-board is original; Carmi has replaced everything else. How Carmi came by the piano is a long, romantic tale that I have no space for in these columns; but if you acquire this disc you are sure to enjoy James

Lyons' telling of the story in the jacket notes.

The Siena piano seems to me the culmination of the skills that produced the type of piano that Mozart knew. Those familiar with this so-called Stein-type piano know that it is warm, sweet and creamy in the bass and in this region closer to a modern piano than to a harpsichord than a modern piano). The Siena piano has these qualities, but they seem more refined and beautiful than I have hitherto encountered. Moreover, this remarkable instrument has more tonal color than in any Stein-type piano I can recall. What the instrument does not have is a wide dynamic span, and I suspect that for all its vibrance you cannot shade the color of any single tone very much. All the admirable qualities of the Sienna piano are brought forth in the Scarlatti sonatas (Rosen has, by the way, made a fine selection of numbers) and, above all, in the wonderful B flat sonata of Mozart. Rosen plays each in appropriate style—sharpness of contour in the phrasing, lightness and sparkle in the rhythm. The recording lets one hear everything. Highly recommended.

—C.J.L.

**RAVEL:** *Gaspard de la Nuit*, *Jeux d'eau*; *Miroirs*, *Pavane pour une infante défunte*; Reine Gianoli (piano). Westminster WN or SWN-18008, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲THE CLARITY of Westminster's recording and Gianoli's mood-sustaining performance of *Ondine* in the *Gaspard de la Nuit* are admirable, but I can find little else here that seems extraordinary. The room resonance of the recording does not appear appropriate, and I was unable to get the sound balanced to suit me. Furthermore, the surfaces on my copy were unusually noisy (a problem I have seldom encountered with Westminster). And Gianoli is for the most part disappointing: she takes *Le Gibet* at too slow a tempo; she does not have the technical security to play *Scarlo* or *Jeux d'eau* with the abandon one wants; and paucity of imaginative power keeps *Miroirs* from being as effective as these pieces can be. In this literature, then, I suggest Casadesus, who has recorded on three LPs the entire Ravel keyboard output.

—C.J.L.

**SONATAS OF THE 17th & 18th CENTURIES:** *Sonata quarta in C minor* (Kuhnau), *Sonata di primo tono* (Pasquini), *Sonata in F major*, L. 384 (D. Scarlatti), *Sonata No. 10 in D major* (Paradisi), *Sonata in C minor* (C. P. E. Bach), *Sonata No. 34 in E minor* (Haydn); Dorel Handman (piano). Oiseau-Lyre OL-50078, \$4.98.

▲ACCORDING to the English magazine, *The Gramophone*, Dorel Handman has lectured via the radio in England very successfully on a wide variety of subjects.

## VOICE

If his lectures are as fine as his playing is on this record, they must have been delightful. Rarely does a release come along that is as thoroughly satisfying as the present collection of sonatas. Many were written for the harpsichord, nevertheless on the piano sound right in these performances. Mr. Handman keeps the dynamic level in correct proportions, and also avoids dryness using his pedal carefully. The whole production is unre-servedly recommended. The notes are models of their type, with source material given. Most of the works are unfamiliar, although a few, such as the Paradisi, Scarlatti and Haydn sonatas were recorded years ago on 78 rpm. In addition to the advantages of the present release listed above, it must be said that the piano tone is excellent in every way, with a fine open sound.

—R.R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Twelve Piano Pieces, Op. 40;* Nadia Reisenberg (piano). Westminster WN or SWN-18005, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲TCHAIKOVSKY did not win his reputation on the strength of his piano compositions, as we all know. And try as hard as she will, Nadia Reisenberg cannot make the 12 pieces that make up *Opus 40* seem any better than they are. There are a few numbers that give modest pleasure by their Russian folk flavor and occasionally by the composer's invention. There is also the novelty of hearing the keyboard version of the delightful *Russian Dance* which was orchestrated as a miniature violin concerto in third act of the original version of *Swan Lake*. However, these points of interest are probably insufficient to arouse any group other than the Tchaikovsky students and enthusiasts. The recording of Reisenberg's admirably direct playing is very close. This makes for splendid clarity and for fine sound in all but fortissimo passages. But in these latter, one feels an unnatural absence of spaciousness. My review copy was not altogether free of surface noise.

—C.J.L.

**VIVALDI-BACH:** *Concertos in F, C, and G;* **MARCELLO-BACH:** *Concerto in D minor;* Julieta Goldschwartz (harpsichord). McIntosh LP disc mc-1001, \$4.45.

▲THE MUSIC this well-recorded disc offers is of exceptional value and freshness—it was a good idea to put together four of Bach's transcriptions for harpsichord. Miss Goldschwartz's LP debut, however, is not wholly successful. From her playing one senses a rhythmic stolidity and a certain capriciousness when she attempts to get some variety into her work. On the other hand she generally seems serious about what she's doing and she shows respect for the composer's intentions and for her instrument, a very grand Pleyel.

—C.J.L.

**BACH:** *Cantata No. 170, Vergnuegle Ruh', beliebte Seelenlust;* *Cantata No. 54, Widerstehe doch der Suende;* *Mass in B minor—Agnus Dei;* Alfred Deller (counter-tenor) and Leonhardt Baroque Ensemble; Gustav Leonhardt (organ and director). Bach Guild BG 550, \$4.98.

▲TO HEAR this music in Deller's voice is an experience in itself. Some, of course, will not like it; others will find it profoundly satisfying. Naturally the whole effect of the music is different. The contralto is by nature the most sumptuous of voices, and sumptuousness is not the property of the male alto. In its place Mr. Deller gives us vocalism as neat as a pin, singing marked by high musicianship and an always evident understanding of the words. True, in the recitative of *Cantata 170*, which the annotator describes as "explosive," the singer seems rather mild, but this is that kind of performance. The recording benefits by the use of 1642 organ in Vienna's Franziskanerkirche, and from a fortunate balance between voice and instruments. One feels the atmosphere of the church. *Widerstehe doch der Sünde* seems to me definitely more effective than the previous recording featuring Roessl-Majdan, an excellent artist but not at her best in this cantata. After the immaculate execution of Deller the contralto's singing seems particularly heavy. And I especially like the tension Leonhardt's ensemble builds up in the prelude to this work. Deller's leisurely tempo in *Vergnuegle Ruh'* strikes me as more in keeping with the text than that of Roessl-Majdan. The *Agnus Dei* is sung in the most perfect of taste and the most accomplished of styles. —P.L.M.

**BRAHMS:** *Vier ernste Gesänge;* *Wie bist du, meine Koenigin;* *Wie Melodien zieht es mir;* *Komm bald;* *Die Mainacht;* *Ach, wende diesen Blick;* *Die Schnur, die Perl' an Perle;* *Wir wandeten;* *Minnelied;* Bruch Boyce (baritone) and Jacqueline Bonneau (piano). Oiseau Lyre OL 50044, \$4.98.

▲THE *Ach, wende diesen Blick* seems to be a first recording; *Die Schnur, die Perl' an Perle* has not previously appeared on LP, and *Komm Bald* only once in a performance less impressive than this. Satisfactory is the word for Bruce Boyce. His reputation as a lieder singer is built securely on the virtues of musicianship, intelligence and taste. His voice is serviceable if not particularly warm, his method dependable, his diction correct and clear. He is at his best in the more outspoken songs, such as the three mentioned above. While the challenging long phrases of *Die Mainacht* hold no great terrors for him, he is not particularly concerned with the potential atmosphere

of Brahms' music. The voice is in good estate in this recording, but the well-played piano is not too naturally reproduced.

—P.L.M.

**DUOS CELEBRES:** *Carmen—Parle moi de ma mère* (Bizet); *Manon—Duo de la Rencontre* (finale Act I) (Massenet); *Mireille—Chanson de Magali* (Bizet); *Roméo et Juliette—O nuit divine* (Act II) and *Va, je t'ai pardonné* (Act IV) (Gounod); Pierrette Alarie (soprano) and Leopold Simoneau (tenor) with Champs Elysées Theatre Orchestra conducted by Pierre Dervaux. Westminster WL-5358, \$5.95.

▲THESE French-Canadian singers have youthful charm and admirable musicality. They are appropriately mated in duets for young lovers since, as husband and wife, they have made appearances together in recital and opera, both in this country and Europe. Simoneau, one of the most gifted lyric tenors now before the public, has appreciably evidenced his versatility in several roles on LP (see *Cosi fan tutte* review). The vocal sweetness of his wife is her chief asset; she would do well to develop more intensity in her singing to vary her characterizations. The duets from *Carmen*, *Mireille* and *Manon* are admirably performed, while those from *Romeo and Juliet* are somewhat lacking in requisite passion, yet the illusion of youthful lovers is appreciably conveyed. The duet from *Manon* is from the finale of Act II, where the lovers elope in the chartered coach of Guillot, rather than from Act III as indicated on the disc. Both Westminster and your reviewer, who wrote the annotation for this disc, were misled by the information previously sent from Paris. Also, the labels on my review copy are reversed. The recording is excellent with an equitable balance between singers and orchestra. —P.H.R.

**MOZART:** *Idomeneo—Tutte nel cor vi sento;* *Nozze di Figaro—E Susanna non vien;* *La Clemenza di Tito—Deh se piacer mi vuoi;* *Ecco il punto;* *Basta, vincenti, K.486a;* *Alma grande, K.578;* *Bella mia fiamma, K.528;* Hilde Zadek (soprano) and Vienna Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Bernhard Paumgartner. Epic LC 3135, \$3.98.

▲TWO of the concert arias are new to records, which is perhaps enough to sell this disc; the selection from *Tito*, better known as *Non piè di fiori*, is more famous than well-known, therefore especially welcome. Aside from the *Figaro* number, indeed, nothing here has received much attention from contemporary singers. Zadek's voice, I think, could sound better than it does, an impression remaining with me from her Metropolitan season and not overcome here. The tone wants more concentration, and she is not quite equal to some of the brilliant passages in her arias. Still, her singing has a certain

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distinction, good musical poise. *Bella mia fiamma* has been recorded before by Magda Laszlo and by Kaethe Nentwig. Of the three sopranos Laszlo makes the most of it by means of her ingratiating tone, aristocratic phrasing and the weight she gives to the text. But there is plenty in Zadek's record to justify the duplication. —P.L.M.

**RESPIGHI:** *Il Tramonto* (Poem for Quartet and Voice); *Quartet No. 2 in D* (*Quartetto Dorico*); Barylli Quartet with Sena Jurinac (soprano, in *Il Tramonto*). Westminster Limited Edition Series WLE-101, \$5.75.

▲RESPIGHI was a masterly and facile craftsman, who tackled almost every form and style in music. He is best known for his large orchestral works. The intimately expressive side of his art is found in works like these, especially *Il Tramonto*, a setting of an Italian translation of Shelley's poem *The Sunset*. Romantic in mood, this opus with its delicate and allusive writing relies on the vocal beauty of the singer for its eloquence and expression. Sena Jurinac was an ideal choice; she sings with much feeling and lovely tone. The Barylli Quartet do ample justice to the instrumental background (Respighi also scored this work for orchestra). The Doric quartet is far removed from *Il Tramonto* with its modal mood. Respighi's treatment of this ecclesiastical modality is not that of the artist in meditation, rather that of one seeking new coloristic effects. The work has its introspective moments but also moments in which the orchestral character of the writing makes for dramatic objectivity. Though devised in movements like the traditional quartet, the work is played uninterrupted which may make it difficult for some listeners to grasp its patterns on first hearing. Previously, we had a recording of this quartet performed by the Scala Quartet (Urania), not as well recorded as it is here. The Barylli ensemble dig deeper into the music, fully exploiting its dramatic moments and playing the final Passacaglia with more meaningful thrust. Except for some stridency on the part of the first violinist, the performance is a fine one. In both works the realism of the recording is gratifying, notably for its clarity of texture and its fine balance. —P.H.R.

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**SCHUMANN:** *Dichterliebe*; *Myrthen*—*Widmung*; *Der Nussbaum*; *Die Lotoblume*; *Liederkreis*, Op. 39—*Mondnacht*; *Schoene Fremde*; Anton Dermota (tenor) and Hilde Dermota (piano), Telefunken LGX 66023, \$4.98.

**SCHUMANN:** *Dichterliebe*; *Liederkreis*, Op. 24; Petre Munteanu (tenor) and Franz Holetschek (piano). Westminster (standard) SWN 18010, \$3.98; (de luxe) WN 18010, \$4.98.

**SCHUMANN:** *Myrthen*; Petre Munteanu (tenor) and Franz Holetschek (piano). Westminster (standard) SWN 18006, \$3.98; (de luxe) WN 18006, \$4.98.

▲THE two latest interpretations of *Dichterliebe* bring the total at present available to eight (or, if you count both performances of Souzay, nine). The contrast between Dermota and Munteanu is rather striking, for whereas the former has a voice of more than ordinary appeal, the latter must rely in his musicianship and sense of style. Dermota, essentially an opera singer, knows more about controlling his tones than most vocalists practicing today; he uses a good deal of *mezza voce*, for the most part effectively. Sometimes, as in *Mondnacht*, when such soft singing overbalances the piano, the effect is rather curious; the balance throughout the recording is not above reproach. Some of his tempi seem to me questionable, and, though surely this is not his fault, there is too much pause between the first few songs, which should be connected—the tape editor has made individual things of them. Munteanu has all the right impulses, but his is a rather "gray" voice, and we miss the touch of excitement a really vivid personality or imagination would bring to them. His *Dichterliebe*, therefore, must place in the estimable second class. If he has a besetting fault it is a certain listlessness, a want of movement, noticeable in the very first song. The Heine *Liederkreis* (not to be confused with the more famous group of songs to Eichendorff texts, Op. 39) is a real contribution to the Schumann discography. There are several fine songs here—most notably *Schoene Wiege meiner Leiden*—and some very tiny miniatures. The opus is actually no more a cycle than the Eichendorff set, but it fits together as a group, and it is full of delightfully Schumann-esque touches.

The fact that *Myrthen* begins with *Widmung* (*Dedication*) and ends with *Zum Schluss* (*In conclusion*) is about all that holds its 26 songs together. The poems range from Goethe, Heine and Rueckert to Burus and Byron in translation. I have often wondered what an integral performance would be like, and now I have my answer. The first difficulty is the obvious fact that some of the songs are strongly masculine in their expression, while others come somewhat embarrassingly from the male voice. A two-singer performance is thereby indicated, though some problems of equal distribution might arise. Aside from such reservations, I did not find listening to so many brief Schumann lieder too much for one sitting. Munteanu again displays his taste and musical feeling, though a smoother vocal line is conceivable. His diction is generally excellent, though he has a peculiar way of pronouncing certain words—I had trouble understanding the very first line of the first song. In *Der Nuss-*

*baum* he follows Schumann's rather stupid mistake (substituting the word *Blaetter* for the poet Mosen's *Aeste*). Holetschek plays the piano parts well, and the tone of his instrument is particularly well recorded.

Translations, original texts and notes by Peter Hugh Reed accompany the de luxe editions of the Westminster records, but not the standard. —P.L.M.

● **A SQUARE TALK ON POPULAR MUSIC:** *The Decline and Fall of the Popular Song; Survey of Singing from Madrigals to Modern Opera*; Anna Russell (comediennes) with Jimmy Carroll and His Miserable Five, Eugene Rankin (piano) and Arthur Hobberman (flute). Columbia ML-5036, \$4.98.

▲ANNA RUSSELL is the musical and phonographic wit of our day, quite adequately filling the places of the pre-war Bétove and Alec Templeton. But as those two considerable artists were laws and talents unto themselves, Miss Russell bears little resemblance to either. This record, like its predecessors, was taken at an actual performance, complete with applause and audience noises though it lacks the important visual finish of her hilariously penetrating history of popular song. On the second side of the disc she manages to find all that is vulnerable in singing down the ages. In the madrigal she sings all the parts (as she has done in Gilbert and Sullivan on an earlier record). The Bachian cantata aria with flute is especially choice, though I believe I enjoyed most the "boosey ballad" *Yesterday*. A friend of mine confessed the other day that he can no longer listen seriously to modern French songs because of what Anna Russell had done to them. If you are that sensitive, by all means keep away from this devastating performance.

—P.L.M.

## Editor to Reader

▲AFTER considerable preparation and work through the hot summer months, during which time the larger format of this magazine was planned, Mother Nature intervened in its launching and delayed more than ten days the mailing of the first copy. Diane, that destructive hurricane visited Easton, Pa., where our printing is done, and prevented work for two weeks. The Post Office at Easton was closed for five days, owing to flood waters. Five of the seven bridges at Easton were so badly damaged that they were condemned and one bridge went down the river. Six blocks of homes in the residential section have been condemned, and a large portion of the business section is still cleaning house. Our printer, on high and dry ground outside of Easton, was without power for over a week and, of course, without postal facilities. Though coming events may

"cast their shadows before," man is left powerless in the force of nature.

## Reviews in Brief

**BACH, J. C.:** *Quintet in F major for Oboe, Violin, Viola, Cello and Harpsichord; Quintets in D major for Flute, Oboe, Violin, Viola and Continuo; Sonatas in D major & G major for Flute and Harpsichord;* Collegium Pro Arte. Oiseau-Lyre OL-50046. \$4.98.

▲NOT even the dull, uninspired playing and rather weak recorded sound can obscure the glories of the music of the "London" Bach on this release. It is a pity that the performances and the sound are not better, because there is all too little available of Johann Christian in current catalogues. The notes on the record sleeve give some details about the composer's life, but they say nothing about the music, the dates of composition, where they are available, opus numbers, or any relevant information. Perhaps we may expect some other group to give really satisfactory performances of these excellent scores. —R.R.

**HAYDN:** *Quartet in B minor, Op. 64, No. 2; Quartet in D major, Op. 64, No. 5 ("Lark"); Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet. Westminster WN-18015. \$4.98, or SWN-18015. \$3.98.*

▲THE LATEST in the series of recordings of Haydn quartets by the Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet contains two interesting works from *Op. 64*. The familiar "Lark" Quartet is one of the composer's most famous, and there have been quite a few recordings. The first movement of the present version will be a bit deliberate for some tastes, but the rest is pure delight. The other work does not seem to have been recorded before. This is surprising, because it is great work. Cobbett remarks that it was unduly neglected, even when his monumental study of chamber works appeared in the late '20's. The present performance should acquaint many people with an exciting and unusual score. The recording is lifelike in each work. —R.R.

**FALLA:** *Siete Canciones Populares Espanolas;* **RAVEL:** *Don Quichotte à Dulcinea;* Aurelio Estanislao (baritone) and Hedy Salquin (piano). London 10" LD 9180. \$2.98.

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The American RECORD GUIDE  
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▲THIS may seem a strange release from London, whose catalog contains both sets of songs sung by the popular Souzay. The present singer, a name completely strange to me, has an agreeable, modest voice, a little throaty in the soft songs, but generally good in quality. The Falla group still does not seem right to me in the baritone range, and some of the singing on this side of the disc is rather square-cut. Perhaps the novelty of the Ravel performance is the piano accompaniment. Also, there is something to be said for the singer's conception, which is straighter than Souzay's. On the other hand, in making the choice, Singer's authentic recording must still be taken into account. —P.L.M.

**FOLK SONGS OF THE NEW WORLD:** *Black is the color; I've been working on the railroad; Wayfaring stranger; Cindy; I wonder as I wander; On top of Old Smoky; Shenendoah; Skip to my Lou; He's gone away; Drunken sailor; Streets of Laredo; Sometimes I feel like a motherless child; Blue tail fly (arr. Roger Wagner and Salli Terri); Roger Wagner Chorale (solos by Salli Terri, Marilyn Horne and Harve Presnell).* Capitol P 8324. \$4.98.

▲THIS is a really fancy all-out program of folk songs in choral guise. Hardly a trick has been overlooked in making them "effective"—there is clapping and whistling along with all sorts of choral virtuosity. We have Mr. Wagner's own statement on "...the responsibility of presenting folk songs today in musical settings which preserve their original frame of thought and emotion." Well, maybe. But surely no one will deny the sheer mastery of the group singing nor the effectiveness of the husky-voiced alto solos. Nor are we likely to hear a chorus more splendidly reproduced. —P.L.M.

**BRUCKNER:** *String Quintet in F;* the Koekert Quartet and Georg Schmid (viola). Decca DL-9796. \$3.98.

▲HARMONICALLY half-Schubert and half-Wagner, as the program notes properly admit, this Bruckner work nevertheless is unique in the entire literature for its reduction of outright symphonic texture to quintet dimensions. Those who find the Bruckner symphonies too rich for their stomachs are urged to expose themselves to this more palatable and decidedly more protein repast. The performance is loving, the sound absolutely the best I have encountered on domestic Decca. —J.L.

**GERSHWIN:** *Concerto in F; Rhapsody in Blue;* Sonora Bianca (piano) with the Pro Musica Symphony Orchestra of Hamburg conducted by Hans-Jurgen Walther. MGM E-3237. \$3.98.

**THE SERIOUS GERSHWIN:** *Rhapsody in Blue; Concerto in F; Piano Preludes 1-3; An American in Paris; Porgy and Bess Suite (arr. Gould); Piano Solo from Porgy and Bess (Act 1, Scene 1); Morton Gould (piano), Vincent Abato (clarinet, in the Rhapsody), and Morton Gould's Orchestra.* RCA Victor LM-6033, 2 discs. \$7.96.

▲TWO more versions of the *Rhapsody* and the *Concerto*, barely a month after another pair with which we need not concern ourselves comparatively. Miss Bianca is a native New Yorker, and she plays both works with remarkable idiomatic feel. The pleasant surprise in these performances, to say the very least, is the fantastic skill by which Walther and his Hamburgers belie their national origin. Except for odd moments here and there, you would believe that you were listening to a solidly American ensemble from some medium-sized middle western city. Good sound. The Victor package deal has one disadvantage—it includes a slick orchestral distillate of Gershwin's great folk opera and not the opera itself, or even a selection of the vocal highlights. Barring that lone qualification (and to remedy it would have added \$15 or so to the price), it is indeed a fact that Gould and company give us the "serious"

Gershwin in just about as succinctly organized set as anyone ever devised, down to a handsome brochure by Arthur Schwartz that includes a reproduction of the long and perceptive review of the *Rhapsody* premiere by the late Olin Downes. Gould is one of the most perfectionistic all-around craftsmen in the business and he is forever arranging things, but I must say to his credit that with the exception of the *Porgy* synthesis he does all of his Gershwin straight—meaning in this case that when he underlines something it is because he knew that's the way Gershwin wanted it. In other words, the album is a labor of love, amply requited. Silky smooth sound. —J.L.

**HEIFETZ PLAYS—Melodie** (Gluck-Kreisler), *Hymn to the Sun* (Rimsky-Korsakov, arr. Kreisler), *Wienerisch* (Godowsky), *Humoresque* (Dvorak-Heifetz), *Hungarian Dance No. 7* (Brahms-Jochim), *Habanera* (Ravel), *Masks* (Prokofiev-Heifetz), *Preludes, No. 1 and No. 2* (Shostakovich), *Clair de lune*, *Goliwog's Cakewalk* and *Beau soir* (Debussy-Roelegs and Debussy-Heifetz), *Giant Hills* and *Moto Perpetuo* (Burleigh), *Deep River* (arr. Heifetz), *Levee Dance* (C. C. White) and *Gweedore Brae* (Crowther); Jascha Heifetz (violin) with Emanuel Bay and Milton Kaye (pianos). Decca DL-9780. \$3.98.

**AN IGOR OISTRAKH RECITAL—Unaccompanied Sonata No. 1 in G Minor (Bach), Chaconne (Vitali), Rondo (Mozart-Kreisler), Tarantelle (Vieuxtemps), Scherzo-Tarantelle (Wieniawski), Fountain of Arethusa (Szysmanowski), and Impression (Kabalevsky).** Igor Oistrakh (violin) with A. Makarov and I. Kollegorskaya (pianos). Vanguard VRS-461. \$4.98.

▲THE Heifetz disc offers as much unadulterated Heifetz as you are apt to find at the price, which will be enough to recommend it in some quarters. How many of these originals and transcriptions he had done, or has since done, for RCA Victor I cannot say because the catalogues are tricky about the contents of such recitals. Prospective buyers ought to check their libraries and other available issues, therefore, before buying. That problem aside, it must be said that Heifetz is in top form throughout this amazingly varied program. The sound is first class, and both accompanists are eminently satisfactory. Young "Prince Igor"—son of the illustrious "King David" Oistrakh, is himself an artist of surpassing gifts. His *Chaconne*, and also the Bach, are less penetrating than exciting, but he carries off the rest with an aplomb that bids well for his virtuous future. The sound is variable, some of the performances having been taped in Paris, others in the Soviet Union. Still, a disc decidedly worth the attention of string men and others who do not object to recorded recitals on principle. The Szysmanowski piece is a joy forever and I am inclined at the moment to say that I have never heard it better played. —J.L.

**MODERN AMERICAN COMPOSERS, VOL. I—Pumpkin Eaters Little Fugue and Workout for Small Orchestra** (McBride), *In the Valley of the Moon*, *Sleepy Hollow Suite* and *Air and Scherzo* for oboe, strings and harp (Mourant), and *Round Dance and Polka* (Kay); solo instrumentalists and chamber ensemble from the New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Camarata. London LL-1213, 2 discs. \$3.98.

▲THE implications of that "Vol. 1" give pause. If there is to be a sizable representation of "modern American composers" in this series, it behoves us to hold our fire and await subsequent issues. If there is to be only or mostly just more of the sort of stuff assembled herewith, on the other hand, the graceful thing would be to deplore the semantic difficulties attending any serious practice of the tonal art these days. As you may have inferred from the titles listed above, or perhaps from the slow boil I am trying to hold down, this recording devotes itself to the "classical-cute" repertory that has grown willy-nilly in the past few years. Leroy Anderson and Robert McBride

being the principal instigators. Walter Mourtant is not a newcomer to this orbit, either, but Ulysses Kay is. Even at that, Kay's considerable creative gifts shine through these pages of profitable hayseed. Satiny performances, expertly engineered.

—J.L.

## FOLK MUSIC

• WESTMINSTER has issued four welcome folk music recordings. Ethnically the most esoteric is Volume I of *Bedouin Tribal Songs from Oran* (WL-5332), sung by Sheiks Khaldi and Mohammed Belmahi to the accompaniment of an unidentified ensemble. Bedouins are native to the area that includes Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, but their music if of course native to Andaluz, where the Arabs flourished for several centuries before Ferdinand and Isabella drove them out in 1492. The annotations tell us that a standard Arabic composition of yore was composed to last 24 hours. Latter-day Bedouin musicians seem to have lost the stamina of their fathers. (Allah be praised.)

Still, there is a musical fascination in this series of eight excerpts from the standard tribal epics. It would have been sensible to include translations, although not necessarily texts, if the sponsors wanted to elicit anything more. Anthropology students beware. The omnibus disc of *Chants Basque, Chants Occitans and Tonadillas* etc. (WL-5350) is far more edifying, mostly because the notes give us some idea of what the several songs are all about. Canteloube's arrangements are slick sounding, and the Agrupacion Coral de Camara de Pamplona make them seem even slicker, but the melodies are indigenous and all the re-harmonization doesn't detract whit from their heavenly beauty. Westminster's new affiliation with the English firm of Argo has brought forth two other folk music issues: Jean Ritchie singing *Songs from Kentucky* (WN- or SWN-18021) and Edric Connor (baritone) singing *Songs from Jamaica* (WN- or SWN-18023) with the Caribbean (vocal quartet) and Earl Inkmann (piano). The dulcet-voiced Ritchie has been with us before on the Elektra label; prospective customers for this disc should compare the contents. Connor sings magnificently, but Tom Murray's settings are arty in the extreme, as if they were meant to be sung in Town Hall all along. Connor keeps reminding us of those Hit Parade programs on which Lawrence Tibbett had to sing the likes of *Bell-Bottom Trousers*; that or a plush Kingston night club featuring local talent. But the songs are Jamaican and there are few enough of them on LP to justify this caviling. All four of the preceding discs are quite high in fi, as their source would indicate. No texts on the last-listed pair either, however, presumably on the theory that their contents are in English. But the tongue as she is spoken in the Ozarks and the Carib colonies is not exactly pure, to say the least.

SINCE it's axiomatic that folk artists play and sing about where they come from, I don't suppose one should be shocked to find that most of the

indigenous stuff from Africa in our LP catalogues was recorded elsewhere. On a new Vanguard disc (VRS-7023) we have a sampling from the Cameroons performed, in Douala dialect, by Albert Mouangue "and his African ensemble"—and taped, if you please, in France. Lots of western influence here, to these ears, but then there is in the Cameroons for that matter.

Vanguard's new "International" series also includes the first volume of a Russian sequence that promises to be outstanding. This one (VRS-7024) enlists several of the outstanding Soviet singers—Kosolovsky, Gmirtya, Obukhova, Lemeshev, Mikhailov, Maksakova and notably Pirogov and Reizen—in eleven of the most familiar old Russian songs. Simply beautiful melodies, most of them, and the tapes have been quite well processed.

Moving somewhat closer to home, there is a London International disc devoted to the "musique folklorique" of Alsace, that Franco-German-Swiss melting pot between the Rhine and the Vosges. Jules Mayer, of Schnuckerloch, leads his talent in an engaging round of regionally favorite polkas, schottisches and such.

A way south of Alsace, in Naples, there is perhaps as strong a tradition of local song as you are apt to find anywhere. London-Durium has brought out two albums of lovely Napoli melodies (DLU-96001/2) sung by Roberto Murolo with guitar accompaniment. He has a fine natural voice, apparently somewhat trained but still close to the style of the streets, and some of his offerings—*L'ultimo rose* and *Luna Caprese* for instance—are beautiful beyond words.

Our neighbors to the south own a fantastic legacy of folk tunes. Vanguard has culled a brace of Creole songs from the northern provinces of Argentina, for instance, on VRS-7028. Who doesn't associate Creole music with Louisiana? But here are lots of them from a culture somewhat closer to the actual source, and the artists, Leda and Maria, are so persuasive in putting them over that one begins to think of New Orleans as a sort of delta Tin Pan Alley, so commercial do the latter's Creole songs sound by comparison.

The redoubtable Emory Cook has issued a wonderful recording of the steel bands of Antigua, in the British West Indies (LP-1042). Caribbean tourists long have been entranced by the sound of these unique aggregations (in this case the Brute Force and Hell's Gate ensembles) and it is a wonder that the gentlemen who choose microgroove repertory didn't get around to them before. It's just as well, actually, because Cook's supersonic approach gets results that nobody else could have.

Nearby, in Haiti, Jean Leon Destine and his company of singers and drummers (he is a dancer) have made an exciting, if somewhat sophisticated,

disc for Elektra (LP-30) that will bring back many happy memories for the Americans who have seen this group on television or in person during their recent concert tours. On a London-International record (TW-91040) soprano Andree Lescot sings nine Haitian folksongs and a half-dozen Creole songs of indeterminate origin, presumably also Haitian. Mlle. Lescot has a winning way with this material, all of which vaguely evokes rural France and not unnaturally so.

The U. S. A. is liberally represented. A series of three discs (AAFS-L-44/6) from the Library of Congress assembles in all 28 of our own traditional animal tales as told in the disappearing Gullah dialect of the southeastern Negroes. Albert H. Stoddard of Savannah, Ga., is the narrator. RCA Victor has issued on the Camden label (CAL-219) a program of gambling songs by the now venerable John Jacob Niles—when will we have an LP dubbing of the wonderful old 10" album that included *Black-Eyed Gypsy, I Wonder as I Wander* and *Barbara Allen?* The ubiquitous Burl Ives has come up (on Decca DL-8107) with a recital called *The Wild Side of Life*, presumably because the songs have to do mostly with carryin' on of one kind or another; my only objection to this amusing and elegantly sung program is that the songs are for the most part thoroughly composed and obviously so. This is folk music? On the same label (DL-8108) there appears some competition for the incomparable Burl in Sam Hinton's *Singing Across the Land*; the tunes are the same old tunes (*Springfield Mountain, Frankie and Johnny* and such) but I must say that Hinton puts them over very engagingly indeed.

On the aforementioned Elektra label, four other recent issues seem to me worthy of special mention. McCurdy (EKL-24) offers a delightfully irreverent program called *Sin Songs—Pro and Con*. Alan Arkin (EKL-21) calls his disc *Once Over Lightly*; he has a nice, rather disarming style and now and then he does crazy things like inserting a reference to the Brooklyn Dodgers in the text of *Anne Boleyn!* On the disc entitled *Bad Men and Heroes* (EKL-16), McCurdy alternates with Jack Elliott and the very talented Oscar Brand in such as *Billy the Kid, Robin Hood and the Pedlar and Jess James* (in two versions that make him out a hero and a badman respectively).

Last but not least among the Elektra releases is a special double-disc set (EKL-701) in honor of Josh White's 25th anniversary as a recording artist. The program includes a spanking new version of *John Henry*, two sides long and wholly the artist's conception, plus a slew of his favorite numbers that includes *Black Girl, Free and Equal Blues, Delia's Gone* and *You Don't Know my Mind*. This album is wholeheartedly recommended. White may not have quite the silvery voice he owned a decade ago, but he is the granddaddy of all folk singers in our time and there is no other who can affect an audience quite so deeply, either in person or on records, as this notable commemorative issue proves anew.

—JAS

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